

Natalie's Story

IMM/YUF Pilot Project Case Study



Between January and June 2023, Intergenerational Music Making partnered with Youth United Foundation to deliver 4 national intergenerational music making projects whereby groups of Scouts, Rainbows, Beavers, Cubs, and the Boys' Brigade had been connected with their local care homes.

The first of the pilot projects took place in Salford, with The Boys Brigade and HC-One Pendleton Court.

Natalie Whipday is the Director of Operations at The Boys' Brigade, also volunteering at the 53rd unit in Salford. ***"I'd say my most important role is that of a volunteer at 53rd, we're a group in inner city Salford and I volunteer there on a weekly basis and I have done for 19 years."***

The Boys' Brigade is one of the oldest Christian uniform groups in the UK, recently celebrating their 140th anniversary, providing young people with opportunities to learn, grow and discover in a safe, fun and caring environment. ***"The group in Salford work with approximately 80 young people each week, both boys and girls ageing from 5 to 18. Members develop skills, build confidence, make friends, take responsibility and are encouraged to make a real difference in their communities."***

IMM connected The Boys' Brigade with local care home Pendleton Court. ***"The company has been running for over a 100 years and are very well established, we have a lot of connections locally."*** Although the company are well rooted within the community, they had never connected with Pendleton Court, as Natalie says: ***"We'd never had any connections with a care home prior to this project, so the group are based at Emmanuel Church which is less than a mile. It's literally a five minute walk from the church to the care home. IMM and YUF were integral in forging the initial connection with Pendleton Court and our group."***

Before the project began, a member of the IMM team visited the group to talk to the young people about the project. Natalie states: ***"This was a real eyeopener for us as leaders because the young people quickly became quite invested and had lots of questions. And rather than just taking the group of young people to meet some residents, it was quite clear it was going to be much more."***

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During the introductory session, the young people had many questions. ***“They were really intrigued to find out more. Questions like: Are they all poorly? Are they there because they have no family who pays? What if they can't afford it? Do they have dementia? They were really intrigued to understand really quite deep questions, which we weren't necessarily expecting.”***

Deciding to work with the junior section (aged 8-11), Natalie explained what she initially expected the outcomes to be from the project: ***“From a volunteer leader's perspective, I was expecting the project to benefit the residents and would be a really nice thing for the young people to do. I couldn't have been more wrong. The impact was not only on the residents, it was on the residents, families who were often present during the session, the staff at the care home and then us as leaders.”*** She then went on to explain the impact of the project on those taking part: ***“The young people just flourished in confidence as the weeks went on and there were real mutual respects and friendships being formed between a variety of ages. The young people were more and more excited as the weeks went on to the point they were ultimately planning and leading the sessions. They were making cards and letters to take for specific residents and there were happy tears. Comments from residents such as 'This is the best day ever' were relayed back to parents and teachers and the group were reporting back to their BB group each week, updating their peers about what they've been doing talking about specific residents they might have made connections with. They took part in school assembly talking about the project.”***

“The intuition of the young people to really read the room ensured residents were being included. No one was being left out, even those residents who were non-verbal they engaged with to include them. Visiting family members were brought to tears when they'd not seen relatives smile until then, because they'd not communicated for so long. So it was certainly a highlight of my week and I was very much thinking I'd just support the project but I was certainly benefiting as well as everyone there. So the goal of creating more inclusive, compassionate societies was happening before our eyes, they were definitely fostering meaningful connections with the residents.”

When the project was coming to an end, the young people were upset and voiced their views on what more could be done. After the project, the relationship between The Boys' Brigade and Pendleton Court flourished, taking part in a number of activities and family days, inviting more young people and family members to take part. ***“A number of our older members who I think would have been a bit more reserved initially have come to help with the younger ones and that's got them involved. There's volunteer placements now for their major A rewards. For our King's Badge they have to do so many hours in the community so we've linked them up. So and they go and it's a trusted place where there's a relationship already there.”***

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Reflecting on the success of the project, Natalie explains: *“From my work perspective as a charity at operational level we've really seen this the success of this project, so we've shared the good news around what we've been doing with our 1200 groups. The next steps in relation to that is we've linked it into our term and spring programs and we'll be doing like a themed program that will run to try and engage groups in making that initial connection. It was something that I knew would sort of make an impact, but I've been a big advocate of it since because it's something that didn't take a lot of time. Although you commit into the week, it didn't take a lot of planning from a volunteers perspective. When volunteers are doing so much, it was very much on a plate. It's trusted and you've got someone from another organisation who's done a lot of the work already.”*

